

**ARROWHEAD RIPPER:  
ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP IN FULL SPECTRUM OPERATIONS**

**Colonel Fred Johnson**

**June 2009**

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ISBN 1-58487-392-2

## PREFACE

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antulio J. Echevarria II', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

ANTULIO J. ECHEVARRIA II  
Director of Research  
Strategic Studies Institute

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

FRED JOHNSON received his commission as an infantry officer from Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1985. Colonel Johnson's first assignment was as a rifle platoon leader with 2-22 IN in the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum, New York. He then served as Battalion S1 and commanded B/ 3-187 Infantry at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Colonel Johnson served as an Observer/Controller at the Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, Louisiana, and later as an operation's officer for the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Upon completion of the Command and General Staff College, Colonel Johnson served as the Battalion S3 and XO of the 1-314 IN (Training Support) and then again as the Battalion S3 and XO of 4-31 IN in the 10th Mountain Division. After an assignment as the senior training support advisor to the 3-124 Infantry of the Florida National Guard, Colonel Johnson commanded 2-39 Infantry at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. He then served as the Deputy Brigade Commander and Commander of the Brigade Special Troops Battalion (Provisional) in the 3-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Fort Lewis, Washington. Colonel Johnson will take command of the Accession Support Brigade at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in the summer of 2009. Colonel Johnson's operational deployments include Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, JOINT ENDEAVOR in Bosnia, and IRAQI FREEDOM. Colonel Johnson holds a B.A. in Sociology and Government from Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina, and a Masters Degree from the Command and General Staff College. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College Class of 2009.

## ABSTRACT

In an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reflects on “whether formations and units organized, trained, and equipped to destroy enemies can be adapted well enough and fast enough to dissuade or co-opt them—or, more significantly, to build the capacity of local security forces to do the dissuading and destroying.” This question is central to the on-going debate over whether the Army has the proper structure and training to perform full spectrum operations. This monograph reports that 3-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) effectively operated as a “full spectrum” force during Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER in the city of Baqubah, Iraq, from June to September 2007. The Brigade Commander organized the SBCT to conduct simultaneous kinetic and nonkinetic operations, task-organizing his brigade to leverage the Iraqi military, local leaders, and Iraqi systems already in place to accomplish his mission of defeating al-Qaeda and stabilizing the city of Baqubah. Ultimately, adaptive leadership, at every level, enabled 3-2 SBCT to operate in a full spectrum campaign.



## **ARROWHEAD RIPPER:**

### **ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP IN FULL SPECTRUM OPERATIONS**

In an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reflects on “whether formations and units organized, trained, and equipped to destroy enemies can be adapted well enough and fast enough to dissuade or co-opt them – or, more significantly, to build the capacity of local security forces to do the dissuading and destroying.”<sup>1</sup> This question is central to the on-going debate over whether the military, specifically the Army, has the proper structure and training to conduct both conventional and stability operations. Some experts claim that the Army actually requires two (and even three) distinct force structures to respond to the evolving strategic environment, where stability operations will characterize most future missions. Noted military analysts make a case for change, arguing that the “full-spectrum” approach will produce an Army that is a “jack of all trades and a master of none.” They contend that the Army, in its present configuration, cannot reorient rapidly enough from conventional to stability operations and that the skill sets for the two distinct missions are too diverse to be effectively executed by a full-spectrum force.

This analysis notwithstanding, my experience during a 15-month tour of duty in Iraq as the Deputy Commander of 3-2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT) supports an opposing view. BCTs not only can, but also must, perform both conventional and stability operations, often concurrently, to win wars and the ultimate peace.

This paper reports that 3-2 SBCT effectively operated as a “full spectrum” force in both the conventional warfighting and irregular stability operations during Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER in the city of Baqubah, Iraq, from June to September 2007. While Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER was a tactical operation, it represents, in microcosm, why the Army must continue to build and resource a “full-spectrum” force.

Colonel Steve Townsend, commander of the 3-2 SBCT, made our success possible because he organized the Brigade to conduct simultaneous kinetic and nonkinetic operations. He also developed a campaign plan which provided a clear intent to his subordinate commanders, allowing us to achieve our ultimate purpose of enabling the local government to assume ownership of their jurisdictions and resume normal affairs. This experience shows that the Army does not require unique skills beyond those needed for conventional operations to perform stability operations. Indeed, the most important resource in stability operations is the host nation’s citizens. When Army leaders on the ground properly recognize and determine how to leverage a host nation’s systems and people, they can employ their conventionally trained soldiers to mount a successful full-spectrum operation to defeat the enemy and win the peace alongside the host nation.

#### **The Prelude to Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER.**

In July 2006, 3-2 SBCT deployed to Mosul, Iraq, and assumed responsibility for the northern province of Ninewa, an area comparable in size to Maryland. Mosul is the capital of Ninewa Province and the third largest city in Iraq, with a population of over 3 million. 3-2 SBCT was also responsible for Tal Afar, another key Iraqi city. Ninewa

borders Syria, Turkey, and Kurdistan. Its diverse population includes Sunni, Shia, Kurds, Turkomen, Christians, and Yezidis, among others. The Arrowhead Brigade was, in OIF parlance, a “battle-space owner” in charge of all lines of operation including security, transition, governance, economics, essential services, and information operations. 3-2 SBCT partnered with two Iraqi Army Divisions with associated Military Transition Teams (MiTTs) and the Iraqi Police and worked closely with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The Arrowhead Brigade conducted operations in Ninewa for almost 5 months before deploying to Baghdad and becoming the Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) operational reserve and the Multi-National Division-Baghdad (MND-B) “Strike Force” (see Figure 1.)

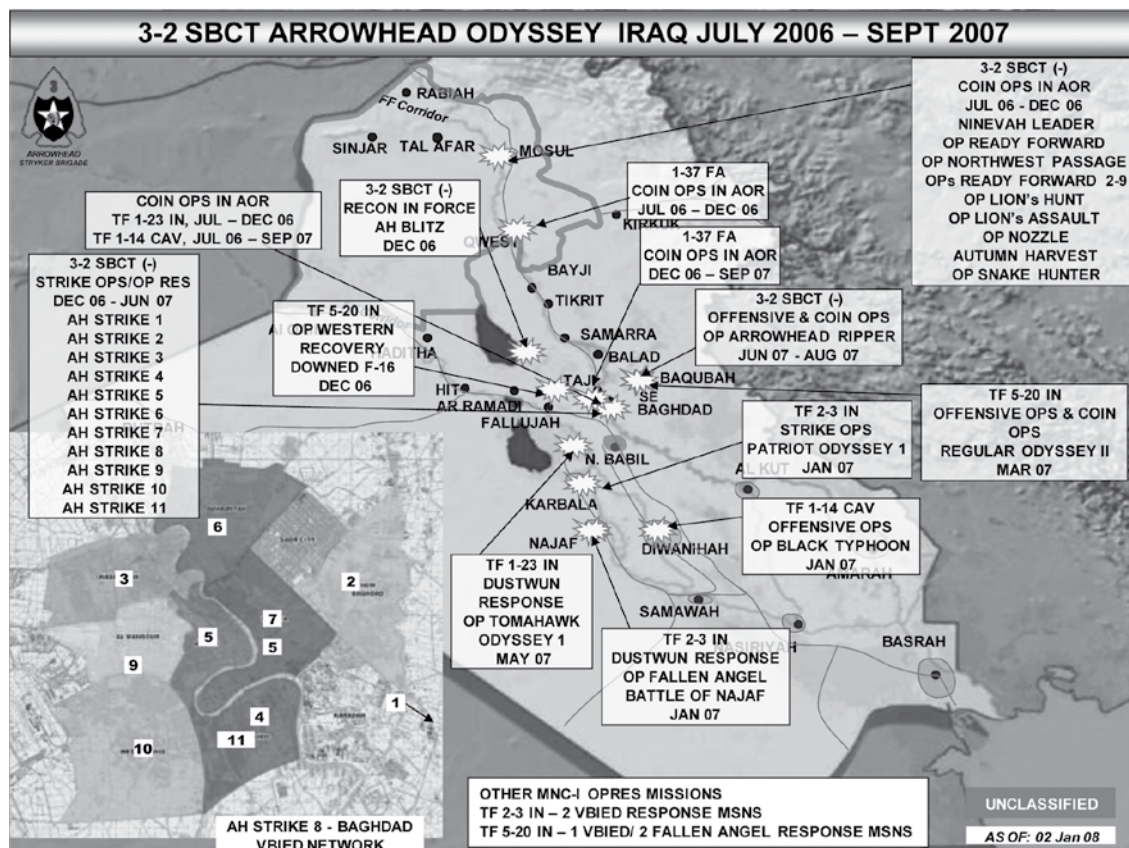


Figure 1.

3-2 SBCT self-deployed and conducted a reconnaissance in force of Lake Thar Thar, an al-Qaeda stronghold, en route to Baghdad. In Baghdad, the Arrowhead Brigade worked closely with “battle space-owning” BCTs operating in every district and major neighborhood in the city of 7 million. 3-2 SBCT was an “above ground force,” meaning it was not responsible for the nonkinetic lines of operation other than limited partnering with the Iraqi Army, Police, and National Police. Our primary mission was to work in concert with the other BCTs to clear specific neighborhoods of enemy forces. The Arrowhead Brigade was on the attack during our entire 6 months in Baghdad: We conducted 11 brigade-size offensive operations and many more battalion through platoon level missions in support of the battle-space owning BCTs.



A number of our battalions also served numerous times as the MNC-I reserve. For example, 1-23 Infantry fought a major battle on Haifa Street during the early phases of the surge and 2-3 Infantry defeated the attack of a large fanatical Shia force near Najaf, which resulted in over 300 enemy personnel killed in action. Our battalions also participated in operations with other BCTs on time-sensitive raids and to recover missing U.S. soldiers. In March 2007, 5-20 Infantry was attached to 3-1 Cavalry, a Heavy BCT, in Baqubah, Iraq. 3-1 Cavalry was responsible for all of Diyala Province and required additional combat power to help secure Baqubah, the provincial capital. 5-20 Infantry, working with 3-1 Cavalry and 1-12 Cavalry, a Combined Arms Battalion (CAB), secured and pacified two large neighborhoods on the east side of the city, but they lacked sufficient combat power to complete the destruction of the enemy and secure the remainder of the capital of Diyala. The city was under siege by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Our commanders had to do something to prevent AQI from maintaining a foothold in this strategic location just 40 miles north of Baghdad.

### **Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER.**

In late May 2007, MNC-I ordered 3-2 SBCT to attack and clear AQI from Baqubah, the provincial seat of government in Diyala and the putative capital of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), AQI's hub of power. Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER, the deliberate attack against AQI in Baqubah, massed the combat power of 3-2 SBCT, 2-1 Cavalry from 4-2 SBCT and 1-12 Cavalry, exemplary of a conventional offensive operation our Army traditionally trains to execute. Similar to operations during the invasion of Iraq, ground forces maneuvered in concert with close air support, artillery and attack aviation, to close with and destroy an enemy estimated in strength at over 500 fighters (see Figure 2).

The operation started on June 19, 2007. Two weeks of combat resulted in the nearly complete removal of al-Qaeda insurgents from Baqubah. Our forces – with the support of the 5th Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and local citizens, who took up arms to defend their neighborhoods – rendered the insurgents ineffective as a fighting force. However, operations to complete the total defeat of our enemy had barely begun.

Prior to the attack, the west side of Baqubah, identified as the command and control center of ISI, was a ghost town. No civilians moved on the heavily-mined streets. The insurgents closely monitored personal conduct of the citizens for compliance with strict Sharia Law. AQI also used essential services such as water, fuel, and food distribution to control the population. 3-2 SBCT had to ensure life was better after the attack than it was when AQI dominated the city. If not, citizens would have no reason to risk the lives of their families to insurgent death squads, whom the populace believed could reinfiltate to exact revenge for supporting the Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Quality of life had to improve quickly. Success of a counterinsurgency (COIN) attack has a short “shelf-life.” It was particularly short for 3-2 SBCT because the “Arrowhead Brigade” had only 60 days to complete its task before it would begin redeployment.

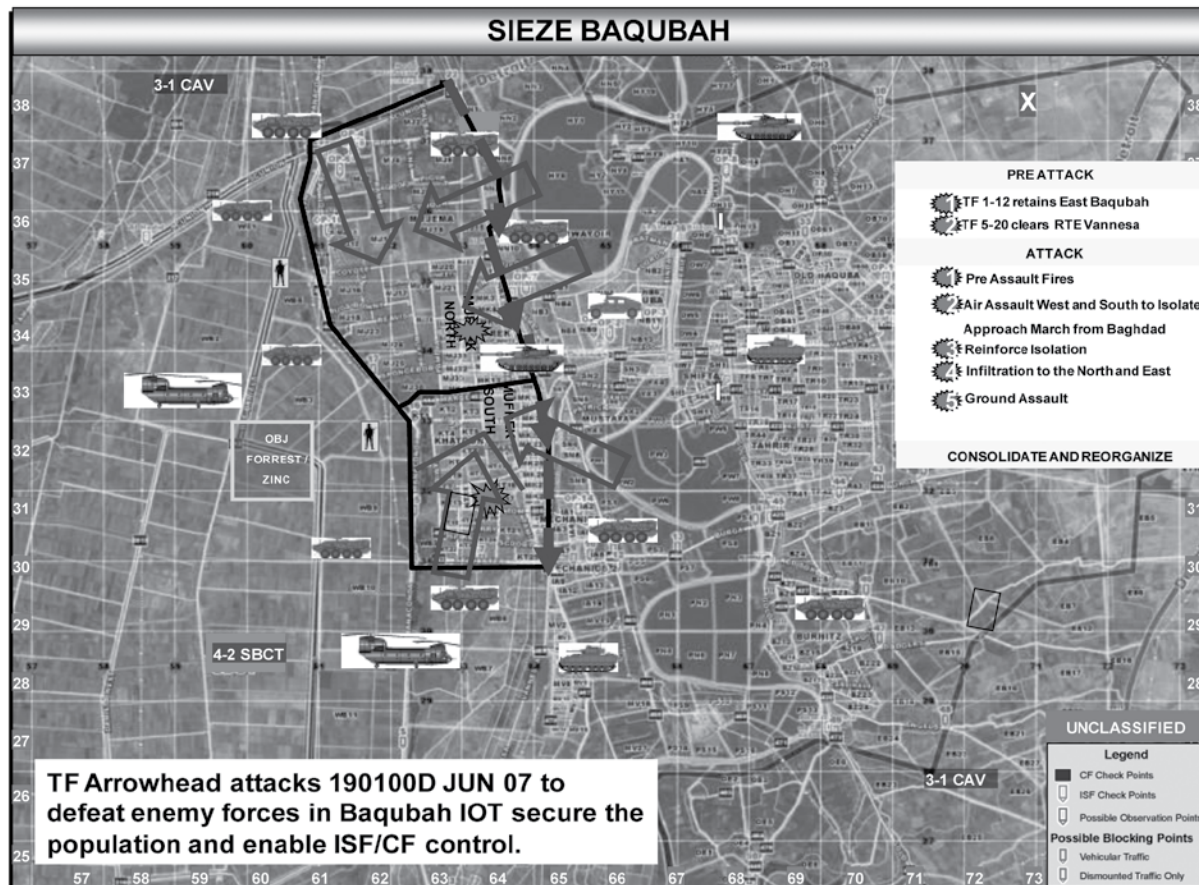


Figure 2.

Colonel Townsend exploited the security provided by the elimination of AQI by implementing a campaign plan focused on establishing an even more secure environment through active partnering and synchronization of operations with the Iraqis. We created safe neighborhoods that controlled access into the heart of the city with entry control points (ECPs) and Joint Combat Outposts (JCOPs) operated by 3-2 SBCT soldiers, Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP). 3-2 SBCT continued the offensive by pursuing the enemy and attacking it outside the city to keep AQI off balance. The citizens began to feel more secure in their homes. Concurrent with these operations, another decisive aspect of our campaign plan was underway—reestablishment of essential services and the restoration of an atrophied local government and economy (see Figure 3).

Infrastructure, along with governance and economic systems in Baqubah were in decay from a decade of sanctions and almost 5 years of war. To make matters worse, debathification, coupled with the enemy's successful terror campaigns, left local governments without leaders familiar with the administration of essential services or kept those with experience away from government service out of fear of reprisals from death squads. The Arrowhead Brigade's challenge was therefore multilayered. We called upon our year's experience in stability and counterinsurgency operations in both Mosul

# ARROWHEAD RIPPER CAMPAIGN PLAN

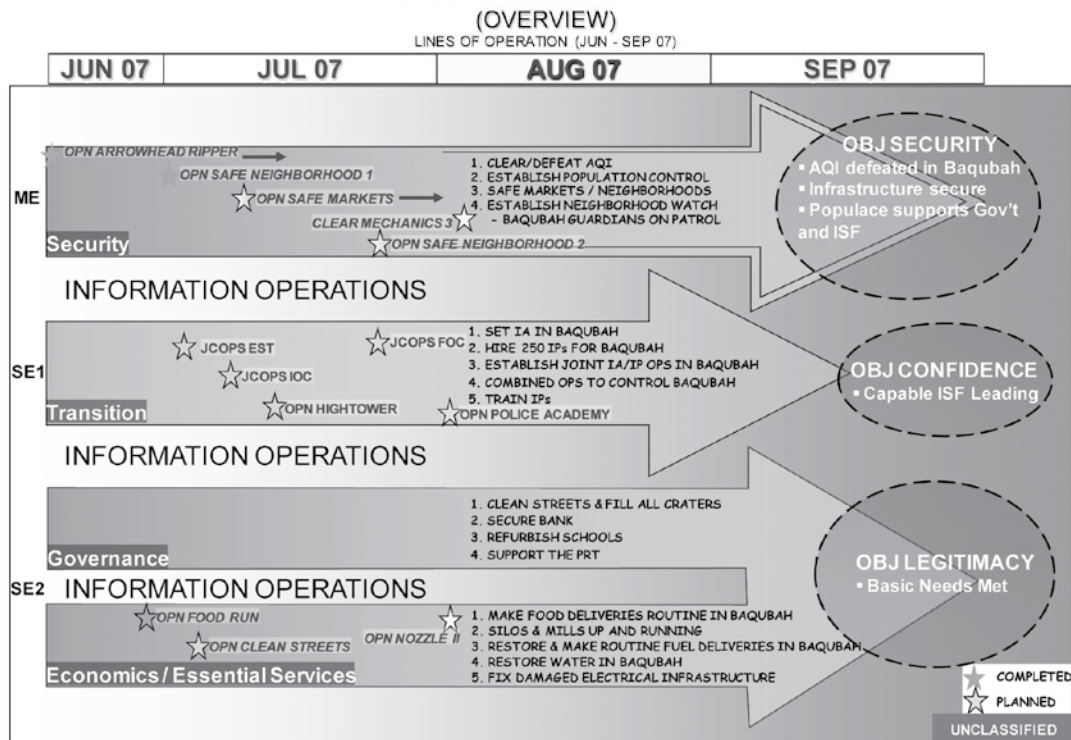


Figure 3.

and Baghdad, along with the lessons of other units that had faced similar challenges. The three key components of 3-2 SBCT's success as a "full spectrum" force in Baqubah were:

- Planning and organizing for simultaneous conventional and stability operations;
- Leveraging host nation leaders, citizens, and systems already in place; and,
- Mentoring the host nation Army to fully maximize their combat potential and employ civil military operations.

## Planning and Organizing for Simultaneous Conventional and Stability Operations.

Our commanders knew going into Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER that we had to not only kill, capture, or force the withdrawal of AQI from Baqubah, but also to make an immediate, positive, and lasting impact on public perception. Baqubah had been cleared before, but AQI reentered the city after each CF withdrawal and renewed its stranglehold on the populace. Every time the city was lost, confidence in the government lessened, fueling the ever-increasing view that the local, provincial, and national leaders were unable to control the country. A prompt and significant demonstration that services would be restored by the government in the absence of AQI had to be made obvious.

During our mission analysis, we noted that Baqubah had gone without its Public Distribution System (PDS) food rations for over 10 months. The populace justly complained that the government could not provide food to its citizens. AQI had also

allegedly taken over the system and used food as weapon to control the population, giving it to the obedient and denying it to those who would not conform. The commanders and staff determined that reestablishment of the PDS would be a means to quickly show an immediate improvement to the population at the start of the operation. As a result, we intended to deliver PDS to the citizens as soon as the neighborhoods were secure. The Brigade Commander then prioritized restoration of other essential services that had to be addressed, including water, fuel distribution, electricity, sewage, and trash disposal. With the citizen's basic needs met, we would then focus our efforts on reestablishing the markets to stimulate the economy and restore the capacity and legitimacy of the city government by working primarily with the mayor and other local leaders.

Accomplishing this task required interface with not only the local government, but Diyala Provincial leaders and members of the Government of Iraq (GOI). It would be extremely challenging for the Brigade Commander to conduct the necessary Sphere of Influence (SOI) engagements and command and control (C2) combat operations at the same time. As a result, Colonel Townsend tasked me, as his Deputy Brigade Commander (DCO), to lead the restoration of services and reconstruction efforts. As second in command of the SBCT, I spoke on behalf of the Brigade Commander directly with provincial officials, including the governor, on matters of governance and economics. My authority was clear to leaders at all levels in the government and throughout our chain of command. Later in the campaign, when the repair of infrastructure would become the priority, Townsend would jokingly refer to me as his "Emir of Sewage."

Meeting the Brigade Commander's intent required me to move to the Baqubah City Hall, the Diyala Government Center, and other locations in the city and elsewhere. Getting around town was not a problem because I had the mobility provided by one of the SBCT's two Assault Command Posts (ACPs). ACP 2 consisted of two Strykers and a FOX vehicle. Our Civil Military Operations (CMO) team, tasked to determine how to jump-start essential services in the city, also included a Personal Security Detachment (PSD), an interpreter, a S2 representative, a communications noncommissioned officer (NCO), and an SOI engagement team of two Civil Affairs personnel. U.S. and Iraqi embedded media and Military Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD) personnel, along with the SBCT S9 (responsible for civil-military operations in the Brigade) and members of the PRT routinely accompanied the CMO team during battlefield circulation and SOI engagements.

On June 19, 2007, with the western side of Baqubah encircled and the initial assault to secure a foothold underway, the CMO team moved in ACP 2 to the Government Center to begin coordination for PDS delivery to the city and identification of other essential service requirements. At the first stop, we met with the PRT representatives to get their views on the status of essential services and PDS. The PRT was crucial to our understanding the problem; it also served as a conduit for meeting key government representatives. Next, we met with the Assistant to the Governor of Diyala in charge of PDS. Finally, we had a meeting with the Deputy Governor and Governor to discuss the way ahead. From these meetings, we learned the lay of the city and met the Director Generals and city managers who had the technical knowledge to fix problems.

We worked issues at all levels simultaneously. We focused next on building a relationship with Baqubah's Mayor, Abdullah Jibouri. However, our first meeting with

Mayor Abdullah revealed a problem in Iraq that was not always recognized but did much to frustrate U.S. leaders and inhibit progress. We sat down in the mayor's office, drank chai tea for over an hour or so, getting to know one another. When I thought the time was right, I asked the mayor, "What do you think we should do about fixing the problems in the city?" The mayor looked at me, sat down his glass of chai, and said, "I have no idea. I was a bus driver before the invasion and just recently became the mayor. I was the only one who would take the job."

The mayor overcame his lack of experience by proactively bringing together a number of contacts he had in the city, probably gained through his years driving the bus. He persuaded the neighborhood leaders, or Muhktars, to start coming to City Hall to resolve problems, rather than complaining about them and doing nothing. The mayor chaired these meetings, and by the time 3-2 SBCT began redeployment back to Baghdad, Abdullah had scheduled monthly meetings with his city council, DGs, and Muhktars.

With the mayor fully engaged, we then focused on figuring out how to get PDS reestablished, and then oriented our efforts on other essential service requirements of the city. Our work was concurrent with the Brigade's kinetic operations. As neighborhoods were cleared, secured, and retained, we brought the municipal government's assets to bear to then fix infrastructure and restore essential services. We knew that one of the most important lessons from operations in Iraq is that units must often conduct conventional and stability operations nearly simultaneously to be successful. To accomplish this, our Brigade was task-organized to do both. That is why the Brigade Commander opted for a command and control relationship under which he ran the security and transition fight, while giving me responsibility for governance, economics, and essential services. The key to Arrowhead Brigade's success in Baqubah was the leadership provided by Townsend and his subordinate commanders: They managed to synchronize complementary nonkinetic and kinetic operations.

As we conducted both conventional and stability operations simultaneously, our number one priority remained securing the population. The CMO team had a small contingent to work the initial supporting effort of reconstruction, but the Brigade Commander's intent was for the CMO team to garner the expertise of the local leaders and the PRT to accomplish my mission. So, the vast majority of the Arrowhead Brigade was performing very traditional roles.

Some analysts argue that soldiers conducting stability operations require a unique skill different than those required for conventional warfare. So, they advise that the Army should create special units designed solely for that mission. However, from my experience in both Iraq and Bosnia, I am not sure how the skill sets of an enlisted soldier or even a junior NCO performing in stability operations are essentially different from those required in traditional operations.

The notion of distinctive skills required for stability operations possibly emerged from Marine General Charles Krulak's essay titled *The Strategic Corporal and the Three Block War*. General Krulak offers a fictional account of Marines handing out humanitarian aid, fighting a conventional battle, and performing peacekeeping operations along three contiguous blocks. General Krulak concludes that "Success or failure will rest, increasingly, with the rifleman and with his ability to make the *right* decision at the *right* time at the point of contact."<sup>2</sup>

General Krulak rightly describes the enormous responsibilities of young Marines and soldiers, showing how their action or inaction sometimes has strategic consequences. Nevertheless, I do not believe this is anything new and especially unique to stability operations. The core strength of our Army and Marine Corps has always rested in empowering junior leaders to use initiative when making decisions. However, the perception of the general public, senior civilian leaders, and even some active officers seems to be that the “Strategic Corporal or Private” is sitting cross-legged, drinking chai with Muhktars and Sheikhs, while negotiating contracts for the repair of damaged infrastructure. This is simply not the case. In the vast majority of instances, soldiers are doing what they have always done: Performing skill level 1 and 2 tasks with disciplined initiative, and responding with alacrity to the orders of their officers and NCOs. Just as in conventional operations, soldiers in the current operating environment are pulling security, reacting to contact, observing rules of engagement, maintaining situational awareness, and living the Army Values they are taught in basic training.

A mindset shift is certainly required when moving from conventional to stability operations, but good leaders make sure their soldiers understand their environment. The disciplined soldiers will respond according to the direction of their sergeants and officers. There is also a greater need for cultural awareness in stability operations because soldiers work in closer proximity to the civilian population. Nevertheless, with the exception of understanding cultural taboos (e.g., not staring at or touching Arab women), observance of the Seven Army Values, particularly the value of Respect, ensures soldiers will act properly regardless of the cultural setting. A working understanding of the language is also valuable. However, we cannot expect every soldier to gain much more than a limited ability with most foreign languages. I spent 15 months in Iraq, studied Arabic using *Rosetta Stone*, was tutored by my interpreter, and still never achieved more than a very basic knowledge of the language.

The soldier skill that makes the greatest difference in stability operations is the ability to protect the population, which requires the same discipline, situational awareness, and aptitude to anticipate and then react to contact as is required in conventional operations. Lieutenant Colonel Chris Gibson, a subordinate commander under Colonel H. R. McMaster during the liberation of Tal Afar in Northern Iraq observed that:

However, there is no doubt that before any meaningful affiliation can occur, friendly forces must demonstrate their competence, particularly the ability to secure the population from the enemy with precision operations and fires (when necessary) while minimizing collateral damage. No amount of money or kindness, and no number of infrastructure programs, will facilitate winning over the populace if COIN forces cannot provide security to the population. Without security, nothing else matters.<sup>3</sup>

With the population secured, the heavy lifting of reconstruction and restoration of essential services, governmental functions, and economic infrastructure can begin. However, except in the case of some Army engineers, it is not the individual soldier



doing the reconstruction. Ideally, the local municipal technicians and workers can fix damaged infrastructure using their equipment and money, as was the case in Baqubah. Nevertheless, the responsibility falls on officers and senior NCOs to assist the local leadership in identifying and fixing problems. But, the unique skills required in stability operations are predominantly “leader tasks,” which are developed in institutional schools and through a personal commitment of officers and senior NCOs to study an array of topics to include history, culture, and even psychology and political science. In addition to these skills, the intangible quality that makes the most difference in stability operations is simple “people skills” inherent in most officers and senior NCOs.

Just before we left Baqubah, an embedded reporter asked me what special training I had to prepare me for leading the reconstruction effort. After thinking about it, it occurred to me that my military training really did not teach me anything about how our CMO team conducted operations in Baqubah. Some extremely talented people, who pointed me in the right direction, surrounded me, but any success I personally enjoyed in Baqubah was a result of what I learned in my dad’s bar in Southern Illinois and as a point guard on my college basketball team. Being a good listener and reading Baqubah like a playing court was more important in directing the reconstruction effort than anything I learned at the Command and General Staff College.

### **Leveraging Host Nation Leaders, People, and Systems Already in Place.**

One of the most significant civil-military accomplishments attained during Operation ARROWHEAD RIPPER was that most essential services were restored and paid for by the Iraqis. The Baqubah Municipalities and Public Works employees repaired damaged water and sewage systems; they picked up trash and debris. The Iraqis fixed the electricity themselves, mostly using money from their budget. However, this was not the case when 3-2 SBCT was in Mosul, where local leaders had grown dependent upon and expected the United States to build and pay for projects.

The lessons from Mosul resonated with the Arrowhead leadership, and one of our long-term goals was to build Iraqi self-reliance and, to the greatest degree possible, enhance Iraqi systems and processes already in place. Again, this was important, because the Brigade was operating in a time-constrained environment. We had only 60 days to accomplish the mission. Knowledge of the combat operation’s short “shelf- life” weighed heavily on the Commander’s mind. Restoration of essential service progress had to be rapid. The citizens needed to see their government, not Coalition Forces, in the lead.

The Brigade Commander’s first essential service priority in Baqubah was reestablishing PDS food. We learned that PDS is a nuanced program established by the Iraqi government in the early 1980s, similar to our food stamps system. Citizens actually became as psychologically reliant on these rations as they were physically dependent. Routinely delivered PDS affirmed that the government was taking care of the populace.

From Mayor Abdullah’s Muhktar meetings, we learned that PDS was a “food basket” consisting of rice, flour, tea, sugar, soap, and beans delivered to the people by the food agents who were government employees. Except for rice and flour, local warehouses received the other commodities from locations throughout Iraq. Food agents picked up the PDS and delivered it to the neighborhoods in trucks contracted by the agents. The

same agents received rice from a local warehouse after processing in a facility south of the city. Local mills processed flour from a combination of Iraqi wheat and imported grain, and agents delivered it to the citizens. However, because AQI shut down mills in Baqubah, flour and rice had to come from Baghdad. But Baghdad refused to ship flour and rice to Baqubah because AQI controlled the city. AQI also threatened the agents distributing the food. So, Baqubah received no PDS.

To fix the problem, both the local and provincial leadership determined that trucks would travel to Baghdad to pick up the food, rather than waiting for it to be brought to Baqubah. Therefore, the first priority was getting the trucks and drivers to go to Baghdad to get the food. Unfortunately, no one would come forward because they feared the Shi'a militia in Baghdad. To allay these fears, we promised to guarantee the drivers' safety by providing security from a combination of Iraqi and U.S. forces. The Iraqi Army and ACP 2, along with a platoon from the Anti-Tank Company, would help escort the convoy of 15 Iraqi civilian contracted trucks. However, the primary reason I accompanied the convoy was to assure the food warehouse manager in Baghdad that Baqubah had been cleared of AQI, so it was safe to resume PDS deliveries to the city. Additionally, the mayor, a member of the PRT, and both U.S. and Iraqi media came along.

We arrived at the food warehouse in Baghdad, and the manager was hesitant to honor the mayor's pleas to release the rations. While I explained to the warehouse manager that Baqubah was secure, insurgents attacked our vehicles outside the compound with grenades. Fortunately, no one was injured. But the attack strengthened our resolve not to leave without the food. The mayor's persistence and the presence of the media that filmed the dialogue eventually compelled the manager to relent and give us the rations. On June 28, 9 days after the initial assault to clear Baqubah, the original convoy of 15 trucks, along with 60 additional trucks coordinated through the Ministry of Trade (MoT) by the Deputy Commanding General (DCG) of Multi-National Division-North (MND-N), arrived in Baqubah with flour. The next day distribution of the food began, and after 10 months, routine PDS deliveries would soon follow.

While reestablishment of PDS deliveries was underway, our higher purpose was to help build Iraqi capacity and self-reliance. As a result, we next focused on helping the Iraqis restore the production of flour and rice. Baqubah had four flourmills and one rice processing facility. The rice processing facility was ready to go; we just needed to transport the rice to the mill from a nearby storage warehouse. However, the flour mills represented a much larger problem. Three of the four mills were abandoned, but fortunately, the one ready for operation had silos that could store the wheat. But there was no wheat to store—even worse, the grain had to come from Baghdad. As luck would have it, the MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG), Lieutenant General Bill Rollo, was visiting Baqubah. We ensured that his itinerary included a visit to the mill. We coordinated our actions through the MND-N DCG-Operations. Then he helped us contact key members of the State Department at the embassy. When Rollo arrived, he brought the Iraqi Deputy Minister of Trade (MoT) with him.

A tour of the mill and silo showed the Deputy MoT that the mill could produce enough flour for all of DIALYA Province if Baghdad routinely delivered the required wheat. The Deputy MoT promised to ship the grain. Within days of the first shipment's arrival, the mill started processing flour. On the day before 3-2 SBCT redeployed to Baghdad, we



visited the mill and ate bread made from U.S. imported wheat milled into flour and baked that very morning in a local mill that had been previously inoperable for over a year.

Even while we were working through the problems of flour production and PDS, the challenge of helping the local leaders reestablish other essential services – such as water, trash collection, sewage, and electricity – remained. However, to accomplish these tasks, we had to locate the people responsible for fixing the infrastructure along with the key facilities, such as water pumping stations and electricity substations. The PRT, again, was helpful making introductions and identifying problems; however, this time they failed to provide enough necessary information to determine the specifics of how, for example, water got to the citizens. It also became clear that the local leaders, and even the DG of Water, were not themselves fully aware of the water distribution problem.

In addition to food, the second biggest complaint of the citizens was that water distribution was sporadic. AQI buried improvised explosive devices (IEDs) under the streets and in sewage systems, making them extremely lethal to U.S. forces and the Iraqi security forces, with the secondary effect of destroying infrastructure, to include water and sewage pipes. Fearing AQI sabotage, public works employees were reluctant to repair water and sewage lines.

So first we had to determine how the water system in Baqubah worked, and then identify the location of water and sewage breaks. A map reconnaissance of Baqubah and discussion with local leaders revealed that drinking water came from two canals on both sides of the city. Four water substations on the west side and one on the east pumped water from the canals, filtered and chlorinated it, and then distributed the safe drinking water to the neighborhoods. The remainder of the citizens got water from a substation north of the city. After a couple of Muhktar and provincial leader meetings, we learned that two engineers were responsible for water works and worked for the city DG of water. They supervised the repair of broken pipes and ensured the substations were operational, but we could not locate them.

Mayor Abdullah took on the task of finding the engineers, while the CMO team conducted a reconnaissance of the facilities and neighborhoods. Over several days, we visited the substations to determine their status. Several were operational, but they were out of fuel to run their generators or did not have chlorine. Others were working at a decreased capacity because of broken equipment. And one substation had been abandoned, and the manager could not be found. The reconnaissance also revealed that the canal on the east side of the city had an extremely low water level, which impeded distribution to the citizens. To compound the problem, our survey of the area exposed six major water breaks and several broken sewage pipes. The city was facing a dangerously short supply of water.

While we delivered humanitarian assistance (HA) water to abate the crisis, HA represented more evidence to the populace that the government was incapable of providing basic needs. Fortunately, during battlefield circulation one day, we saw a group of Iraqis repairing a water pipe. Not far away was a Stryker Platoon patrolling the street. We stopped and inquired who was supervising the mending of the pipe. A man named Mufeed identified himself as the engineer responsible for the west side of the city. He had been afraid to start work until the platoon leader met him through talks with the

neighborhood Muhktar and promised to provide security if the engineer would start repairing the water system.

The platoon leader's initiative, understanding of intent, and willingness to get involved started a momentum that would culminate with almost all major water and sewage breaks being fixed on the west side of Baqubah by the city Public Works employees in less than 60 days. Further, the engineer contacted the supervisor for the east side of the city, and work began there. We also began working with the Assistant to the Governor for Public Works, along with Mayor Abdullah and City DGs, to coordinate the efforts of the Public Works and Municipalities departments to mass labor on large problem sets, such as fixing sewage pipes and collecting garbage. With streets clean of trash and sewage and without the threat of attack by AQI, markets opened and Baqubah came back to life.

Over the past 7 years, the United States spent billions of dollars reconstructing Iraq. While most of the expenditures were required at the national and provincial level to rebuild decayed and destroyed infrastructure, particularly electricity and fuel production facilities, city projects were best accomplished by local workers. Most importantly, Iraqis had to get back to work, and a sense of normalcy and self-reliance had to be established. From an economy of force perspective, it was much more productive to use the host nation's knowledge, equipment, people, and money to repair infrastructure. All they required was a secure environment in which to operate.

### **Mentoring the Host Nation Army to Fully Maximize Their Combat Potential and Employ Civil Military Operations.**

3-2 SBCT attacked Baqubah with the minimum forces required as estimated by the Brigade Commander. One significant deficit was the availability of Civil Affairs personnel to assist the SBCT in restoring essential services. Two Civil Affairs Team Alphas (CAT-A) were task-organized to the Brigade, with no CAT-B to assist the S9. A superb two-personnel team from Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) augmented the austere staff; the PRT and the MND-N TAC were located at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse in Baqubah. They offered some assistance. Nevertheless, like the rest of the forces in Iraq, the Brigade was woefully short of this critical enabler, so it was challenging to address all the problems in the time required without additional CA personnel.

Most U.S. leaders readily recognize that the Iraqi Security Forces, particularly the Army, multiplies available combat power. Whether serving as a clearing or as a controlling force, the Iraqi Army extends a commander's ability to influence the fight. This supports our ultimate objective of transitioning security to the host nation—once this is done effectively, the war will be pretty much over. A secure environment allows people to return to their daily lives, and buys time for the government to determine how best to address other pressing domestic issues. However, the Iraqi Army provides another frequently neglected resource essential to COIN operations—complete cultural understanding and a vast knowledge of how Iraq works. No one knows Iraq better than Iraqi citizens. As was the case more than once during the Brigade's deployment, an unintended positive consequence resulted from a simple discussion with our Iraqi brothers.

The event that immeasurably enabled the reconstruction effort in Baqubah did not occur over chai. This breakthrough came during an intense argument at one of our

daily synchronization meetings with the 5th Iraqi Army at FOB Kameese just outside of Baqubah. I was chairing the meeting in the absence of the Brigade Commander, and the SBCT S9 was briefing the dire state of essential services in the city. An Iraqi Brigade Commander made the comment that it is not the Army's job to worry about such things, and others chimed in with their belief that it was the Iraqi government's fault for the failure of the city leaders to provide basic needs. Having spent the day wading through raw sewage with Mayor Abdullah, I took exception to the comment and asked if the 5th IA had a G9 responsible for civil military affairs. A hand went up, so I asked if he would accompany me during battlefield circulation the next day. It was agreed and the next morning, Lieutenant Colonel Wa'el Hashim, the 5th IA G9, was waiting.

In the weeks that followed, Lieutenant Colonel Wa'el accompanied the CMO team everywhere, meeting Iraqi civilian leaders, assessing damage to infrastructure, and most importantly, engaging locals to ascertain the real problems they were experiencing. At the conclusion of each day, we would trade notes and develop a plan for upcoming missions. Eventually, Lieutenant Colonel Wa'el started briefing civil affairs at the synchronization meeting and in the ultimate coup, the 5th IA Division Commander provided the G9 with a security detachment and vehicles so he could move on his own.

With a means to get around the battlefield, Lieutenant Colonel Wa'el was relentless in identifying ways to improve essential services. Soon, he began coordinating with Lieutenant Colonel Raad, the 5th IA Engineer Commander, to use their backhoe and dozer assets to help Public Works repair sewage and water systems. The engineers cleared streets of trash and removed blockage in the canal so the water could flow to the pumping stations, resulting in distribution that was more consistent throughout the city.

When city workers were afraid to move into a neighborhood, Wa'el coordinated IA security to protect them. Ultimately, the Iraqi Army took on distribution of HA, using PDS food agents to deliver rations to the citizens. The engineers helped build ECPs and JCOPs. Not only was an Iraqi face on all this progress, but it also had the secondary effect of allowing Coalition Forces to focus on finding and killing AQI that loitered on the fringes of the city.

In our 15-month deployment, 3-2 SBCT worked with six of the nine Iraqi Divisions. But none compared to 5th Iraqi Army's ability to execute civil-military operations. This was made possible because we had learned how to partner with our Iraqi brothers and knew that daily contact with the IA through synchronization meetings was important to push the Iraqis into the lead. This routine dialogue was not only a means to coordinate operations, it was a professional forum where leaders discussed how best to counter the insurgency. Ultimately, the 5th Iraqi Army leaders learned that to be successful in this kind of war, they have to not only be able to fight, but they also have to learn to rebuild.

## **Conclusion.**

The Arrowhead Brigade went to Baqubah at the 12-month mark of its tour in Iraq. We had learned many lessons about how to conduct counterinsurgency operations after our year's experience first as battle-space owners in Ninewa and then as an offensive Strike Force in Baghdad. However, one of the most important things we learned was that both mental and physical agility are necessary to be successful in such an environment. The

capability to adapt that Secretary Gates addresses in his *Foreign Affairs* essay is more about how leaders see and understand problems. It is not about changing the structure of our Army.

In his essay “Adapt or Die,” Major General Dave Fastabend reminds us:

Most large organizations, particularly commercial enterprises, have found that innovation is key to institutional survival, embracing continuous adaptation to remain ahead of their competitors. For the military, this notion of relentless competition has a special significance. Our “competitors” are living, thinking, and adaptive adversaries who mean to destroy us and the society we defend. Our choice is quite clear: “*Adapt or Die.*” Failure does not mean Chapter 11 and an updated resume. Failure means death and destruction for ourselves, our comrades, and all that we cherish.<sup>4</sup>

Major General Fastabend also advises that we must also know “when and how” to adapt. Our Army faces many challenges that require innovation. However, regarding our response to the conduct of stability operations, this is not the time for significant change. More importantly, choosing the wrong alternative could make us more vulnerable to the threat that Fastabend describes. In its current configuration, our Army can continue to maintain its superiority among competitors in traditional combat while retaining its ability to perform stability operations.

Arguably, our initial failure in Iraq was not due to an inadequate force structure. Rather, it was our failure to organize our forces effectively to confront the challenge. More importantly, we failed to act on Carl von Clausewitz’s advice to properly identify the type of war we were fighting. Early in the war, as the environment evolved in Iraq, we were slow to adapt to it. But this changed as the war progressed, with leaders identifying the problem, organizing their forces, and providing the vision to address the challenge. This ability to adapt was clearly evident in Mosul, Tal Afar, Ramadi, and in Baqubah, among other places, where units quickly responded to the changing nature of the conflict. Our eventual success was due to adaptive commanders who empowered junior leaders and created agile units in training that quickly made the transition from conventional warfare to stability operations.

The change that is required is educational, and possibly cultural, but not structural. We must continue to train our officers and NCOs how to think about problems and give them the intellectual foundation to quickly recognize what works and what does not work. Our doctrine must continue to recognize the necessity of being a full-spectrum force. As General David Petraeus points out, “We cannot kill our way out of an insurgency.” At the same time, fighting remains a core Army competency – along with securing the peace that supports our national interests. Our Army can and must do both.

## ENDNOTES

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